WITH COUP

(PARIS) -- THE IRON-FISTED RULER OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE HAS BEEN OVERTHROWN IN A BLOODLESS COUP. JEAN-BEDEL BOKASSA (ZHAHN BEH-DEHL' BOH-KAH-SAH) HAS RULED SINCE 1965 AND WAS THE COUNTRY'S FIRST SELF-PROCLAIMED EMPEROR. HE WAS OVERTHROWN BY FORMER PRESIDENT DAVID DACKO.

BOKASSA IS REPORTED TO HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY, PROBABLY FOR LIBYA. THE 49-YEAR-OLD DACKO, WHO WAS HIMSELF OVERTHROWN BY BOKASSA ON DECEMBER 31ST, 1965, SAID IN A RADIO BROADCAST THAT HE HAD RE-ESTABLISHED A REPUBLIC IN THE AFRICAN NATION.

DACKO WAS HELD UNDER HOUSE ARREST UNTIL THREE YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS FREED BY THE EMPEROR AND NAMED A PERSONAL ADVISER TO BOKASSA.

DACKO, BORN TO AN AGRICULTURAL FAMILY IN BOUCHIA IN THE WESTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY, WAS KNOWN AS A BRILLIANT STUDENT WHO BECAME A TEACHER AND EVENTUALLY DIRECTOR OF A SCHOOL. HE ENTERED POLITICAL LIFE IN 1957 AS A DEPUTY IN THE TERRITORIAL ASSEMBLY.

AFTER THE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM FRANCE IN 1960, DACKO WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. DURING HIS PRESIDENCY, HOWEVER, HE WAS FORCED TO TAKE A NUMBER OF AUSTERITY MEASURES TO REVITALIZE THE ECONOMY. THESE MEASURES WERE ILL-RECEIVED BY THE POPULATION AND EVENTUALLY LED TO THE COUP BY BOKASSA, THEN A COLONEL AND HEAD OF THE ARMY.

BOKASSA, WHO PROCLAIMED HIMSELF EMPEROR IN DECEMBER 1976 AND CHANGED THE NAME OF THE COUNTRY FROM THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE, RECENTLY WAS ACCUSED OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MASSACRE OF ABOUT 100 SCHOOLCHILDREN WHO HAD PROTESTED REGULATIONS REQUIRING THEM TO WEAR UNIFORMS TO SCHOOL.

THE CHARGES WERE MADE BY THE LONDON-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND LATER CONFIRMED BY AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF AFRICAN JURISTS. THEY SAID IT WAS ''QUASI-CERTAIN'' THAT THE EMPEROR HIMSELF TOOK PART IN THE MASSACRES

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